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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004071

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: IECI LUKEWARM ON COALITION DETAINEE VOTING

Classified By: Classified by David C. Litt, Political-Military Affairs Counselor, for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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11. (C) The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq has wavered in its support for MNF-I plans to allow 11,000 Coalition security internees to vote in the October 15th constitutional referendum, suggesting that IECI will provide monitoring teams only if Iraqis held in pre-trial jails by the Ministry of the Interior and Ministry Of Defense are also able to vote.

12. (C) It is not clear that MOI in particular has adequate resources for this project, nor that IECI can supply teams to the large number of small, far-flung MOI facilities. MNF-I has proposed instead that MOI teams be invited to Coalition facilities on October 15th to watch Coalition-organized detainee voting, with an eye to making similar arrangements for MOI detainees in the upcoming general election.

13. (C) Senior ITG officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Abid Mutlaq al-Jiburi have indicated that they will speak directly to IECI members and urge them to de-couple these two essentially unrelated issues.

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STRONG SUNNI AND MNF-I INTEREST IN DETAINEE VOTING  
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14. (C) Interest in detainee voting is high in the Sunni community. The Iraqi Islamic Party considers the 11,000-strong, mostly Sunni detainee population to be a key constituency, and is distributing copies of the Korans to detainees this Ramadan; DPM al-Jiburi has made stump speeches at several recent detainee releases from Abu Ghraib.

15. (C) Many detainees have also expressed interest in voting, though not always constructively. The most damaging riot in a coalition detention facility to date occurred on February 1, 2005, sparked by detainees demonstrating in protest against their inability to vote in the previous day's election. (IECI opposed their participation, although it did not provide a rationale.)

16. (C) In August, IECI appeared to support allowing MNF-I detainees at Camp Bucca and Abu Ghraib to vote in the October constitutional referendum, which would require IECI to send a four-person team to each facility. As a result, MNF-I has made the necessary logistical arrangements (as well as commissioning videotaped readings of the constitution for the consideration of often-illiterate detainees).

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PREVIOUS IECI SUPPORT REVERSED  
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17. (C) However, last week interim UN Commissioner Carina Perelli informed MNF-I that IECI would not support voting by Coalition security detainees at Abu Ghraib and Camp Bucca unless similar voting arrangements were made by the Iraqi MOI and MOD for an estimated 2,400 prisoners held in jails and holding facilities nationwide - a logistically daunting proposition in which MOI has shown little interest. (Note: Under the Iraqi Penal Code, convicted prisoners held in MOJ facilities are not entitled to vote for any representative council.)

18. (C) MNF-I is proposing in response that MOI personnel observe voting by Coalition detainees on October 15th, in preparation for pre-trial prisoner voting at MOI facilities in future. DPM Jiburi and Deputy Minister of Human Rights Nermin Othman have told us that they intend to urge IECI members to support Coalition detainee voting on October 15th regardless of MOI and MOD's ability to make similar arrangements.

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COMMENT  
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19. (C) Given that in MNF-I's view there is little connection between MNF-I making arrangements for voting by Coalition security internees and MOI and MOD doing the same for pre-trial prisoners in Iraqi custody, it is tempting to draw the conclusion that IECI's UN advisors are simply unenthusiastic about the prospect of providing eight personnel to supervise voting at Abu Ghraib at Camp Bucca.

110. (C) However, IECI to date has not expressed concerns about their ability to provide teams for MNF-I facilities. Unless the IECI expresses substantive concern about capacity, or it appears that permitting Coalition detainees to vote will hamper electoral efforts elsewhere, MNF-I and the ITG officials will continue planning for detainees at Abu Ghraib and Camp Bucca to participate in the October 15th referendum.  
Satterfield